18: Merker

FL12 Masai FL12

163

[For information on the number of births per woman of the sample of 39 Masai women taken by Merker, see category 116, pp. 546, 548-550, 558-559, and 563-585.]

/199 cont./

853 bring back the milk secretion by a copious drinking of liquid sheep fat. Meanwhile the child is nourished with cow's milk.

757 For pains in the uterus (eñ gusset) and in the uterine ligaments (es saból, es sábo) the woman drinks a root decoction of ol mañgulai (Grewia villosa).

847 824 [237] To induce an abortion, the one concerned drinks a decoction of dried goat manure or a strong decoction of os segi (Cordia quarensis) or ol durgó root. During the subsequent two or three days of convalescence she takes a weak decoction of ol mokotan bark or one of the bark of ol oilale (Colubrina asiatica).

• 163 Concerning fertility, the relationship of the sexes, and child mortality I was able to discover the following. The largest number of one woman's confinements that became known to me was 17. The 87 old women questioned had given birth to 548 children all together, which gives an average of 6.3 confinements for one woman. Of these, 231, therefore 42.2 per cent, were boys, 371, therefore [165] 57.8 per cent, girls. Before their circumcision 38.7 per cent of the children died, including the stillbirths.

845 842 It should also be mentioned that the realization of a twin pregnancy is regarded as having arisen through one conception.

/349 cont./

178 241 that are started with as a rule and which one therefore finds in all the settlements. Yet despite the ease of production of the field crops, the transition to agriculture nevertheless is taking place in a way 178 that is reducing the population in extraordinary fashion. First of all, 182 the acclimatization process slowly being accomplished demands a great sacrifice of human lives. The Masai, little afflicted with 164 165 fever in the dry steppes, suffers with it quite seriously in the moist regions in which mosquitoes are permanently at home. Thus on two occasions in the same new settlement I found all the adults and many children sick with fever. Another one had just been abandoned by its inhabitants, leaving the sick behind. The ones left behind, principally men and boys, were badly reduced by fever and, in addition, suffered to a great extent from virulent leg ulcers, whose great extent -- in many cases they covered the entire lower leg, from knee to ankle -- probably is to be traced back to a general weakening of the body by fever and lack of food; for such ulcers are not common among nomadic Masai, and, where they occur, /350/ they remain smaller and show a tendency to heal rapidly. Other illnesses arise from the unfamiliar diet. The rapid transition [262] from an almost pure meat diet to an almost pure vegetable diet makes demands on the stomach and intestines that a body weakened by fever is seldom equal to. Sickness and death from this cause are frequent and are increased further by the consumption of bad water. Thus, more than half the people in one settlement complained of painful diarrhea and bloody stools. All these acclimatization illnesses seem also to manifest their effect in decreased [842] fertility of the women and increased child mortality. I was repeat- [163] edly struck by the small number of sucklings (two-year suckling period) and older children. Thus early in 1902 in Ngaruka, between Lake Manyara and Lake Natron, among a number of about 50 women, I found only twelve children, three of them babies. According to the statements of the parents, very many children had died of various ailments, especially fever, stomach and intestinal affections, several 178 also had perished in Masai attacks. For the Masai who are becoming 619 sedentary, the ones still living among the "people" as nomads are 721 a scourge that scarcely falls short of the illnesses just mentioned in